



Commonwealth of Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet

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Division of Forestry to Collect, Plant Native Seed ***16 species of trees will go in state's two nurseries***

Frankfort, Ky. (Oct. 24, 2013) – Have you ever heard the expression, “from one small seed, a mighty tree can grow?” It means that things of lasting value often start small, even though the final results may not be seen for years.

This expression sums up the work of the Kentucky Division of Forestry (KDF) employees as they currently poke under leaves and among earthworms to find soon-to-be new trees. This year, 16 different species of trees are being collected by staff from all over the state. The seeds will be planted in KDF's two nurseries and include yellow-poplar, butternut, Chinese chestnut, walnut, persimmon, green and white ash, Kentucky Coffeetree, papaw and seven types of oak.

“It's important to collect seed that is native to an area because these grow best in that area's climate and soil and require minimal maintenance,” said Division of Forestry Director Leah MacSwords. “They provide the proper habitats for local birds and animals.”

MacSwords said plantings from other areas can introduce diseases to local plants or not grow well because they aren't adapted to Kentucky's climate or soils.

Seeds are being collected on many university campuses, tree farms, local cemeteries and any place that has a good supply of the species needed. Recently, KDF foresters and volunteers from Kentucky State University (KSU) picked up two truckloads of papaws. KSU has a large papaw orchard that makes collecting seed a little easier. The seeds were removed from the fruit, cleaned and have already been planted in prepared beds at the division's Morgan County nursery. KDF doesn't have a volunteer network so most of the collecting is done by staff.

Papaws, like many trees, drop their mature fruit in the fall. This makes fall the best time to collect and plant seeds but not the only time. The more seed KDF collects, the less the nursery has to buy from commercial seed vendors. Why do we need more trees? There are a lot of reasons:

- Bare spaces — especially on hillsides and beside waterways — encourage erosion.
- Healthy trees and shrubs with strong root systems help limit soil and pollutant runoff, thereby improving the quality of water in our lakes, rivers and streams.
- Leaves take carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and put oxygen back in.
- Some trees, like wild plum and crab apple, are planted to restore grouse and quail populations.
- Black locust and black gum are often planted by beekeepers.
- Papaw is planted for deer but the fruit is also eaten by people.

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